DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 063 592 CS 000 022

AUTHOR Ramsey, Wallace
TITLE Revolution in Teacher Education for Reading Instruction.
PUB DATE May 72
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at Annual Convention of International Reading Assn. (17th, Detroit, May 10-13, 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Behavioral Objectives; *Educational Change; Individualized Instruction; *Instructional Design; Multimedia Instruction; Performance Criteria; *Reading Instruction; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Role; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The past preoccupation of reading teacher education with how reading should be taught to the exclusion of immersing students in the process of teaching reading has reaped resentment toward neophyte teachers' ignorance of reading materials, approaches, and techniques already established in schools. Changes in that perspective of reading teacher education are evident in several movements: (1) the conception and implementation of performance based training, (2) adjustments to individual differences among prospective teachers via instructional modules, (3) greater involvement of preservice teachers in classroom observation and tutoring, (4) replacement of large classrooms with learning centers containing multimedia stations for individual students, (5) decline in the use of the single methods textbook, and (6) reliance upon a team of reading specialists each member of which possesses considerable versatility as a teacher educator. (Author/RD)

ED 063592

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Wallace Ramsey
University of Missouri-St. Louis

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Wallace Ramsey

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

"Revolution in Teacher Education for Reading Instruction"

Session Topic: TEACHER EDUCATION
Thursday, May 11, 10:30 A.M.

There are many unsolved problems in the education of reading teachers. Foremost among these is to find an answer to the question 'What differentiates the more effective teacher from the less effective?

Some say it is an affective or attitudinal factor.

Some say it is an ability to manage materials, children, and time most effectively.

We simply are not sure.

Another unsolved problem is: who shall set the objectives? Is it true that college professors in reading are, by and large, so out of touch with schools that they tend to be too theoretical and turn out graduates who actually learn and remember very little they can apply in the classroom?

Another problem is the one of involving students too little in their own learning and thereby making them too dependent on their professors and less able to operate independently and effectively.

CS 000 022

In the face of these problems the reading teacher educator who attempts to act the role of a prophet and predict the future runs the risk of appearing foolish at some later date when his description of the future turns out to be highly erroneous.

Nevertheless, that is what I hope to do.

A reading teacher educator who left the profession in 1955 after spending his productive years in educating reading teachers in the ways in vogue in the post-war period would be highly impressed with the changes in his chosen profession if he resumed teaching in 1975. The metamorphosis of R. T. E. (reading teacher education) is a rapidly occurring phenomenon. Those who do not note the trends do so at their own embarrassment.

As teacher organizations become more militant, and teachers gain enough confidence to speak their minds about the process through which they were prepared, the nature of R. T. E. threatens to be rudely and emphatically shaken at the weld joints. There is impatience with the typical new teachers' lack of ability to confront and confidently manage the basic activities inherent in teaching reading to growing minds of varying backgrounds, strengths, and tendencies. There is resentment directed at the fledgling teachers' lack of understanding of materials, approaches, and techniques that have been in existence for some time in schools.

Reading teacher education in the past has been preoccupied with study about how reading should be taught rather than immersing the student in the process of teaching reading. The directions of change are numerous and somewhat disturbing to some.

Performance (Competency) Based Programs

The trend to requiring students to attain certain performance-related competencies is well underway, having begun in the late sixties under the goading of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. The analysis of teaching in order to determine the specific competencies needed to achieve various basic tasks in the total process is being gradually accomplished. In the spring of 1968, the U.S. Office of Education commissioned nine institutions to produce plans for model programs in teacher education. In the fall of that year, these were completed. All had the strong thread of performance criteria running through them.

Two years ago IRA president Cleland appointed an IRA Commission on Teacher Education. One of its chief functions has been to explore the use of modules in reading education. These modules contain teacher competencies and performance based criteria and provide for a system of individualized reading teacher education.

The speed with which the movement appears to be being endorsed and adopted by some of our leaders is alarming to some in the fraternity. They point out that the type of program proposed has not been tested through research and instead of humanizing teacher education could dehumanize it.

Nevertheless, at certain institutions a plan of competency-based individualized reader teacher education is being forged and implemented.

As various institutions across the country, and notably at Michigan State University and at the Universities of Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, and Pittsburgh, and at Weber State College, some aspects of courses in the teaching of reading are being arranged in largely self-contained modules with options made available to suit individual student interests and vocational plans. These programs depart from the R.T.E. curriculum that requires

all students in a course to be exposed to the same lectures, readings, films, and examinations at the same time. Reports are available from the individual institutions mentioned above.

The IRA Committee on Teacher Education in 1970 launched an effort to assemble a list of performance-based objectives. Across the country various teacher educators were asked to write objectives in specific areas of reading instruction in which they were perceived to be expert. That list will soon be available, it is hoped, with recommendations for helping students attain them. The Reading Teacher for March, 1972 featured a discussion of "Performance-Based Teacher Education" in Bill Blanton's monthly column on ERIC/CRIER (pages 579-585).

Implementation Effects

Though the inclusion of performance-based objectives is nominally the most notable characteristic of the changing R.T.E. programs, the total implementation of them is having many visible effects. Most class periods are no longer to be spent in lecturing to a mass of students - in fact the assembling of students in masses will decline rapidly in frequency as soon as college and university administrative procedures will permit. These assemblies will give way to small group and individual activities. These include the study of printed exposition, audio and videotape listening and viewing, examination and investigation of teaching materials, observation of quality reading instruction, mini and microteaching of specific reading tasks in simulated situations, planning and teaching of reading lessons to individuals and small groups of children, and to various other activities still in the ideational stages.

It has been known for a number of years that listening to lectures, as compared to reading and digesting the same material in print, was an inef-

ficient way to gain the types of information needed by a teacher. Lectures, unless taped, cannot easily be reviewed and parts contrasted with each other, as readily as can material in print. Many lectures in the past have been poorly organized and prepared and were more likely to dull students' senses than to inform them. Changes in technology and course organization now permit fewer and better-planned and presented lectures, presented live but also recorded on video tape for ready play-back at a time, and under conditions, of the individual student's own choosing. These preserve whatever advantages the spoken word may have over the visual for those students who learn better by listening to an effective lecturer. Videotapes and films of good quality classroom reading instruction, and tapes made by specialists working with individual children, provide effective supplements to readings and taped lectures.

Self-contained packages of learning activities, popularly called "modules" among the new breed of teacher educators, have emerged as the chief unit of organization of courses. Each has its own clear objectives, reading material, suggested laboratory activities, and items for determining (testing) whether students have reached the objectives. Tests are likely to be mastery tests in which the student is required to meet a certain level (or "criterion") before he can move on. Alternative versions of the criterion tests enable the student to make repeated attempts to master the module. The new R.T.E. program recognizes that students learn better through different sensory and cognitive pathways and therefore alternative routes in reaching objectives are provided.

Adjusting to Individual Differences

There is also a recognition that students come to methods courses with different backgrounds of experience, different interests, and different vocational plans. A very basic core of modules dealing with concepts and experience important to all reading teachers is required, but much of the course consists of elective modules from which the student chooses. A student whose previous experience has furnished her with the knowledge and experience contained in a particular core module may spend a very short time reviewing its content and take the mastery exam over it. She may then choose a module suited to her vocational plans. A future kindergarten teacher may select a readiness module, a future intermediate teacher of developmental reading may choose a module devoted to the use of instruments and equipment in improving speed and comprehension. The selections of other students reflect their interests and plans.

Specialists frequently ask how grades can be awarded under the conditions previously described. Several institutions are moving toward the substitution of pass-fail grades for the traditional A, B, C, D, F pattern. Some keep the traditional pattern but sketch out in advance the requirements to be met for different grades. If we are to expect our students to place less stress on grades with their pupils, our practices should encourage it - and the pass-fail option will encourage this.

Classroom - Pupil Tutoring Segments

The school classroom observation-participation segment and tutoring are important aspects of this new R.T.E. These require a reapproachment with the schools in the community. Town and gown are forced into a mutually-respectful union, if these segments are to be included. This has an effect

of making R.T.E. professors more realistic in their outlooks. Teachers in the schools begin to be more aware and respectful of the problem inherent in teacher education.

Teachers tend to welcome teacher education students into their classrooms when they understand, and have some voice in formulating, the objectives students are striving for, and when such students give the teacher the kind of help an additional educated adult can provide in the classroom.

The situation can be organized so that the arrangement is mutually beneficial. The student learns in the classroom without becoming the teacher's slave. The teacher receives some useful help from the student without being forced to take on additional tasks that serve to drain away still more of her energy. When some attention-demanding children, for example, are provided this attention by the neophyte teacher, the regular teacher becomes more reconciled to the extra responsibility entailed by having the observer-participant present.

The tutoring segment of the R.T.E. student can be provided on campus or in the schools. Children can be transported to campus for their tutoring on a regular basis. The idea of going to a college or university for reading improvement frequently relieves the usual stigma of be in "remedial reading." More frequently, however, the tutoring is being done in the schools, since the student's schedule and transportation can be more readily controlled than that of the school pupil.

Facilities and Equipment

The changing program of R.T.E. is likely to have an impact on the facilities, equipment, and materials needed and used in the educating institutions. The need for classrooms in which large groups of students meet

periodically is diminishing. Replacing the large classrooms are learning centers with individual media stations where a variety of audio-visual aids may be used. The videotape playback unit, the audio recorder, the filmstrip viewer, the record player, and the computer terminal are replacing the speaker's lectern and the reserve reading room. Lecture notes and textbooks are being replaced by professor-prepared readings, audio and videotapes, films, filmstrips, etc.

The use of the single reading methods textbook and supplementary library references is likely to slowly decline. In their places will emerge the professor-prepared study guide or expository units providing core reading for each module. Specific references will be used but study of them will be more closely prescribed through study guides. The multiplicity of modules from which the student can select requires a greater variety of references. Sections of books are more likely to be studied than whole books. As writers adjust to the new mode of R.T.E. the nature of references will change so that books will deal in greater depth with fewer topics. The new program requires a larger outlay for funds. Professor-produced readings and modules demand personnel time. More frequent examinations require the use of support personnel. The use of teaching materials in study and tutoring boost costs.

The Professor in New R.T.E.

What does the mode of new R.T.E. suggest about the professor? He will change in nature if he is to do his job better, that much is clear. He will need to be a more versatile person with a greater variety of knowledge. He will design instruction to inform and immerse students in the actual teaching of reading. His task will be, in addition to instructing, to create

conditions for self-instruction. His aim to broadly inform rather than indoctrinate.

In addition to knowing and believing in an approach to teaching reading, espousing a certain theory, or believing firmly in a single set of materials, he will need to know many approaches and theories, and believe that there are many successful roads to reading instruction - as there are. He will need to be more broadly educated in reading, as well as more deeply. The demands will call for people with definite specialization in reading to be managing the R.T.E. program. It is doubtful if the traditional education expert who knows several methods fields well enough to teach them in the typical liberal arts institution will survive.

The type of versatility demanded will be that which permits him to produce effective taped lectures and demonstrations, devise multi-media learning modules, comport with public school personnel, and be an effective diagnostician and remedial expert himself. It is not likely that one person can fill all these roles.

The R.T.E program of the future is likely to be the product of a team of specialists, as it now is in institutions having the more efficient programs. The captain of such a team will be a "reading specialist generalist," a person with a specialty but whose education and temperament suit him to his role. If all this sounds like too much of a change that must occur too rapidly, we must remember that the accelerating rate of change in all aspects of our living, as Toffler has pointed out in Future Shock, must have its effect on education. If future shock is to be avoided, teacher education must be in the vanguard of change.